KASU DESTINY

He promised readily enough to go with us, but Kayo told us later that he would not come.

"He says the white doctor cannot do more than obia can do. He says a man must take what kasu brings."

Was there no obia against kasu? we asked of Kayo.

"No, but kasu is not greater than obia. It is something else. When the Sky God gave obia to man, he gave it to help man live, not to help him do bad things. When men and women earn a kasu for their family, it is because they do what is hateful to the great gods and ancestors. Obia was not sent to save men from punishment."

"Does obia never punish, Kayo?" We were thinking of what he said about his own obia, of how when it seized him, he destroyed things.

But he would say no more. "I am too young, Bob's, to speak of these things. At my age I know only a little obia. You must ask the old men."

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The conversation led us one day to the obia men on the river. They were, we knew, important persons in the Bush Negro communities. An obia man of reputation was not only consulted by his own villagers and clansmen, but men and women came to him from distant villages, when those who were nearer had failed them. It occurred sometimes that even from the Aseba villages on the lower river, three hours-away obia men were sought out—perhaps this was because of the same tradition which encouraged the buying of strange gods to enlarge the family pantheon, perhaps it was because of something which touched still deeper beliefs.

How did a man become an obia man?

From what we had already learnt, it was apparent that here was something which approached the formal education of our own civilization, a form of education, indeed, which we pride ourselves is unique to our own way of life.

All other knowledge the Bush Negro child gains by being about with members of his family who are busy at

the tasks which will fall to his lot when he reaches adulthood. Half in play, the boys and girls help their elders and in that way learn how to work, how to conduct themselves, how to sing and dance, how to make circumlocutions, and how to pray to the gods. What they learn when they come by their gods is also taught them by members of their family. A boy's father and maternal uncles instruct him in the gods they give him. A girl is made familiar with the will of her gods and their manner of worship when her mother and her mother's sisters give their gods to her. Knowledge is, therefore, shared in the family, and much of it, the Bush Negro says, comes to each individual from his gods, since an every boy who watches a fine carver can steal the carving of his teacher. When he does show promise of excellence at a given task, it is because he, too, has a god who helps him do his carving. It is the same with drumming, and singing, and telling stories, and making love.

But obia is learned formally and slowly. An obia man may teach his own brother, or his sister's eldest son, or his own son, even, what he knows, but the learning process will be gradual, for no man may disclose too much to an untrained mind. At times, however, an obia man trains men who are not related to him. He may himself decide upon a young man of promise to whom he cares to impart his knowledge. A considerable sum of money may be offered him by members of an influential family who wish to have an obia man of their own kin and who send a young man to him for training. In a dream or during possession it may become known that the ancestors wish a certain young man to apprentice himself to the obia man they name.

The apprenticeship lasts from three months to a year. The novice goes to live with the obia man, working with him and observing all that his master does. During this period of intensive training he goes with the obia man into the bush and is shown the herbs which heal. He is trained in the manner of betting for the *ab'o*—the soul—

[illegible]

The child loses [illegible] at a very early age and are [illegible] at the funerals.

From [illegible] they are taught to respect and venerate [illegible]. Children [illegible] are severely [illegible].

The [illegible] are taken along to the [illegible] at an early age [illegible] to [illegible] with the processing of wood or [illegible], as well as for hunting and fishing, and they quickly [illegible].

[illegible], sons, and children [illegible] to the river every day.

Chapter XI

[illegible] and [illegible]

They observe the [illegible] with great solemnity. If one of them is [illegible], that is, [illegible], then the corpse is cleaned, [illegible], and it is placed in a coffin, in which [illegible] and [illegible] articles of clothing of the deceased are placed and in which all the relatives also add a few pieces of cloth [illegible] and [illegible] as remembrances, a farewell token on [illegible] is placed. Since they always take care to have sufficient [illegible] and [illegible].

[illegible] the corpse lies in the open coffin for one day before the [illegible] takes place, in order to bid a farewell. The relatives [illegible] around the coffin and sing [illegible] in a manly [illegible] peculiar to them, in which the [illegible] also join from time to time.

After [illegible] the close blood relatives proceed to [illegible] the [illegible] mourning on a mat spread out on the ground for eight days. [illegible] they sing loudly in turn, at the same time [illegible] the strangest gestures, while they eat eight, generally [illegible], little meals with many [illegible], and always ending with [illegible], are [illegible].